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EXTENSION SERVICE  
*Review*

AUGUST 1962

# YOUR AUDIENCES

33/8

**PRACTICAL STEPS FOR LEARNING MORE ABOUT THEM**

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**Official monthly publication of  
Cooperative Extension Service:  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
and State Land-Grant Colleges  
and Universities cooperating.**

**The Extension Service Review** is for *Extension educators*—in County, State, and Federal Extension agencies—who work directly or indirectly to help people learn how to use the newest findings in agriculture and home economics research to bring about a more abundant life for themselves and their communities.

The Review offers the Extension worker, in his role of educational leader, professional guideposts, new routes, and tools for speedier, more successful endeavor. Through this exchange of methods, tried and found successful by Extension agents, the Review serves as a source of ideas and useful information on how to reach people and thus help them utilize more fully their own resources, to farm more efficiently, and to make the home and community a better place to live.

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### **EAR TO THE GROUND**

There are a good many ways of measuring audiences — by income, education, age groups, occupation—and many others depending upon how much you want to know.

Educators have to know their audiences like businessmen know their customers. Today, businessmen speak of teenagers as a special group of customers. Sales to this group run into billions of dollars.

Another indication of customer interests being put more precisely on "target" is the many magazines aimed at special audiences. People may be interested in a lot of things in general, but they are intensively interested in some things in particular.

I bought a boating magazine the other day (No, I don't have a boat!) and was surprised at the amount of specific information it had—on harbors, engines, materials used for boats, activities of yacht clubs. Recreational boating is a booming business, so the boat industry and boat magazine people have to know their audience.

Rather, I should have said audi-

ences. Alongside the magazine I bought were one or two devoted to small boats. The magazine I bought had boats with kitchens (they call them galleys). But news about galley equipment would score a big miss in the small boat magazines.

Another thing about audiences is that they sometimes change fast. A couple years rise in the average educational level of an audience can make a big difference in the kind and quality of the knowledge they want.

And aside from formal education, think of what developments like Telstar will mean.

As you no doubt have figured by now, we are concentrating on audiences in this issue. Extension audiences are as varied as they come, and extension workers have to know how to find out what their people are like.

We hope this issue will point up some relatively easy, yet effective studies carried out by various methods—telephone, mail, mass media feedback, census study, recorded questions—by other extension workers. Maybe one of these methods could do the job for you, too.—WAL

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Openeth Through Agricultural Progress



# What Is an Audience?

by FRED P. FRUTCHEY, Chief, Teaching Methods Research Branch, Federal Extension Service



**Q**UESTION: What is an audience?  
It sounds so theatrical.

**A**NSWER: I hadn't thought of it that way, but I guess it could have that meaning. In the process of communication the audience is the intended receiver of a message. The class in a college course is an audience because it is the intended receiver of instruction. Note that I said "intended" receiver.

In Extension we often use words "clienteles," "group," or "people," when we refer to our audience. We do not usually say "crowd," except when we want the "crowds" to see our exhibit at a Fair.

Our audience in Extension are those whom we want to help, or those whom we are responsible to help, or those whom we have the responsibility and time to help. I expect that the latter is our practical audience if we don't make excuses about the time we have.

**Q**. Doesn't the word "audience" imply entertainment?

**A**. Not necessarily. However, communication is more likely to be effective if it is pleasant to receive. This is especially true of a voluntary audience, like an extension audience. If the message is dull, we may not even have an audience.

**Q**. What do you mean "audience-centered?"

**A**. When we inspect our own thoughts as we prepare our communications, we often find we are thinking most about what we are going to say or write. We are concerned about subject matter content.

**Q**. But isn't that good?

**A**. Yes, it's very good. Or rather, I should say, "very half-good."

The other half is the audience and how the audience may receive our message and act upon it. As a matter of fact, we often think of our audience, for example when we write a direct mail letter to dairy farmers. It is audience-centered because we are thinking of them and writing so it will have impact on them. We have a "target" audience.

**Q**. Then you are saying that audience-centered implies that we have a target at which to aim our message and we adjust our aim to the target. We are concentrating as much on our audience as we are on the subject matter of our letter. Is that what you mean?

**A**. That's it. I expect you try to avoid using technical terms with which they are unfamiliar, or explain them if you have to use them, and try to write in their language. In so doing, you are centering your attention on the audience in addition to content.

**Q**. Yes, I often try to do that. But, come to think of it, when I am writing to the "dairy-farmer," I really have in mind the "full-time commercial dairy farmer." I'm not thinking of the part-time dairy farmer or the family with one or two cows. And often I'm not thinking about how any of those three audiences can use the information in each of their different kinds of situations.

Actually, I guess, there is more than one audience. There are as many audiences as there are people.

**A**. Yes. When you write, a person reads. When you talk, a person listens. You are writing or talking to individuals. Each interprets and responds to your message some-

what differently. Learning is a personal matter.

**Q**. I wish you hadn't said that. How can I expect to help more than one at a time when each has a different background of experience and each interprets the message differently?

**A**. Fortunately, when your message is centered on an audience with common interests, like full-time commercial dairy farmers, similar interpretations are likely. Backgrounds differ, but they overlap. In this overlap there are common concerns, common interests, common needs. There, agreement and common thinking have a climate for growth.

**Q**. That's better, because we can't make our message apply exactly to every full-time commercial dairy farmer, unless it is given during a farm visit or some other personal extension teaching method.

**A**. Farm visits, office calls, telephone calls, direct mail, and individual correspondence are all more likely to be audience-centered. You probably recall instances when a farmer was in your office discussing his problem. Finally you told him you would come out to see his place tomorrow. You wanted to get more exact and specific information about his farm situation before you made a suggestion.

**Q**. Yes, and he didn't like my suggestion. Eventually, I found that it conflicted with some of the needs and interests of the family.

**A**. The family situation is important. The farmer's values regarding his family conflict sometimes

(See *A Dialog*, page 175)

# Cold Figures are Live People

by LORETTA V. COWDEN, Division of Home Economics Programs, Federal Extension Service

**"THE** census is as revealing as a candid camera when you know *how* to look at your county, its cities, and subdivisions," said one Extension Summer School student.

"The census for my county is as revealing as a bathing suit," said another. "I wish I could assemble data down to a 'bikini size' or a '2 x 2' slide' for each subcommittee," moaned a third.

Just as a bathing suit isn't appropriate for all occasions, so, too, we find different census data needed at different times. After a session working with county census data, summer school students at Colorado could see how to put available data to better use.

These students, from 14 different States, found several pointers useful for getting a better picture of their people, or programs for various population segments, and possible methods for future extension work. For example:

- *Think "people," "families," and "households."*

Those blurring, blinding, small print population figures aren't just numbers; they mean people.

It helps to ask: What subject matter would family members of various ages and incomes find useful? What "slant" should be given subjects for each grouping? Which of these should we try to reach through news columns? Which should we aim home economics TV or radio broadcasts toward? Who might attend open meetings in the afternoon or evening?

- *Convert the data to percentage figures to gain a new perspective.*

Let's look at a sample of county material:

Source: U. S. Census population, 1960; General Population Characteristics, Table 13.

(This data is taken from a true county though the name has been changed. Following information is taken from other areas.)

	Total Popula- tion	Percent of Total	Percent Increase 1950-60	Total House- holds	Percent Increase 1950-60
Total Sunshine Co.	49,342	100	18.2	13,790	20.6
Town A	10,660	21.6	127.1	2,686	116.1
Town B	28,534	57.8	9.2	8,467	14.5
Rural Nonfarm	7,157	14.5	—	—	—
Rural Farm	2,991	6.1	—	—	—

The use of percentage figures helps in making comparisons, for example: Towns A and B compared to the county as a whole. With over 100 percent increase in population in town A and with about 10 percent in town B, it is clear that there are relatively more newcomers in these towns than in the county as a whole.

What do we need to consider in reaching these newcomers? Who are the newcomers, their jobs, and income? Do they know us? Do we know them and their concerns? Who are potential leaders among them? Are they now included with program planners? How can we get to know them and find out their real interests?

- *"Round out" figures to give impact and make them easier to remember.*

Which is easier to remember? "Over 100 percent increase in population in town A." Or, "Town A has had a 127.1 percent increase."

The same can be done with other census tables as we consider adjusting our methods and subject matter. For example:

One-fourth of this county's adult population had only eighth grade education or less.

One-half of the adults had some high school or graduated.

One-fourth of the adults had some college or graduated.

The median is 12 years school completed by adults 25 or over.

Does this lead us to wonder if we might not present more depth in nutrition than the "Basic 4"? Would greater depth be more interesting and challenging to this educational level? Isn't it true that as the educational level rises people want to know more and more about a little?

- *Pay special attention to characteristics of county population that help identify important population segments, their interests, and needs.*

Examples: income, educational level, employment status and occupation, ethnic groups, age levels, levels of living, as shown in the housing census.

- *Take a close look at fewer figures —put a magnifying glass on them.*

After you pull out a lot of figures, select and limit the amount of data used at any one time to give impact. Choose those which point up key questions, need for additional data, alternatives for possible programs. Focus on selected figures by using interpretive questions to make details stand out.





Example: By far the largest number, 85 percent, of employed individuals in Sunshine County work for wages. Only 15 percent are self-employed, including farmers.

Do these 15 percent determine job opportunities in this county? Can those who provide employment tell us what they see as future job needs? What are likely to be job opportunities in surrounding areas in 10 years?

- *"Wrap up" or "bundle together" table breakdowns into meaningful groupings.*

Statistics on income are often presented in terms of number of families who report income: Under \$1,000; \$1,000-1,999; \$2,000-\$2,999; etc. Some of these categories can be grouped together in adjusting subject matter to fit income and helping us to see potential audiences.

About 1600 families have incomes of less than \$3,000.

About 2400 families have incomes of \$3,000 to \$6,000.

About 3800 families have incomes of \$6,000 to \$9,000.

About 1800 families have incomes of \$9,000 to \$15,000.

About 300 families (all in towns A and B) have incomes of \$15,000 and over.

Under \$3,000 is often considered the income which allows little spending beyond necessities. Should we emphasize consumer buying, dealing with food, and other essentials for these 1600 families? Would these and the next grouping of 2400 families be potential audiences for this type of subject matter?

Do these 4,000 lower income families use credit? If so, how and from what sources?

How many of the 5,900 families with incomes above \$6,000 are interested in recreational and cultural opportunities of their communities? Would they take part in public af-

fairs programs? Would they benefit by home furnishings or consumer buying meetings and guides. What kind of educational programs challenge higher income and higher educational levels?

- *Combine census data with other information.*

For example: Over 9,000 (about 1/5 of our county population) are between the ages of 9 and 19. Is this our potential 1962 4-H enrollment? What other factors influence our possible enrollment? We have 900 enrolled in 4-H, about 10 percent.

What geographic areas of the county are we now reaching in 4-H? Where do most of these 9,000 young people live? With 60 percent of them in towns A and B, should we concentrate on increased enrollment there first?

What other youth organizations or social and educational opportunities are available in town A and the other five subdivisions with 1,000 to 2,000 population? Who can give us this information? Where is 4-H most needed? What types of projects and activities would fit these young people's needs?

- *Don't fear census data that point to need for more information.*

The census often points up a need for data available from other resources. You can start a subcommittee or planning group to exploring.

For example. About 85 percent of our young people between the ages of 14 and 17 are in school. This leaves 15 percent (about 600) not in school. Census employment tables show less than 4 percent of this age group are employed. Should we look at job opportunities, training opportunities, and reasons why these 600 young people are not furthering their education?

By 1970 there will be 20 percent more Americans and an ever in-

creasing demand for skilled labor. Will these 600 young people be able to compete favorably 10 years from now? What kinds of career counseling are available in this county?

- *"Bridge the gap" between census figures and programs.*

Draw out an interpretation by making these figures come alive. Ask questions, show comparisons, suggest or ask for problems indicated and alternative solutions. Again, use only data which points somewhere—either to a problem for a specific audience, possible methods, or a need for more information.

- *Record census page and table as you take off data.*

This helps when it is necessary to refer back. You will find yourself doing it.

Colorado summer school students finished their work assignment on their county data with these comments: "This gave me a new look at my present program, and I'll work toward reaching newcomers. . . . I'll get people in the rural city fringe in on our planning. . . . I've always thrown too many figures at planning groups before; now, I'll 'bundle' them . . . . This makes sense out of census."

What census publications do you have pertaining to your county? Those dealing with population, housing, agriculture, business, and many other topics are helpful. If your county is in a Rural Redevelopment Area, you'll probably find the *Rural Redevelopment Area Statistical Profile* for your area a useful summary.

(Data used in this article draws examples from compilations by Dr. Starley Hunter, Extension Research and Training, Federal Extension Service, and a summer school paper by Mrs. Aubrey Notman, New Mexico home agent.) ■

# FEED-BACK as an extension method

by EARLE S. CARPENTER, Extension  
Communications Specialist, Massachusetts

**T**HE number of requests for follow-up materials, reactions of people who volunteer information, interviews, pretesting of presentations or materials on an audience—all these are ways to measure results of extension work. And such feed-back is vital as we must ever be alert to the reactions of the people contacted, either personally or via mass media.

Massachusetts, an urban State, has extension offices in all but two counties. Although the State has only 11,000 farmers, one out of every 11 private employment jobs is related to food and agriculture. A potential 185,000 families should be interested in some phase of the Extension Service program.

Only a small percentage take advantage of the opportunities available. So we must try to reach this group, as well as others, via mass media (printed material, radio, and television). This applies not only at the State level but also in the county.

A recent study of our homemakers' television audience on two stations showed only 12 percent ever participated in local extension programs. In a 1959 survey of audience reaction to our Gardener's Almanac program, only 29 percent had contacted their local County Extension Service for assistance with horticultural problems during the year. In 1957 this figure was 21 percent.

## *Suburban Surveys*

Boston University's School of Public Relations and Communications presently is studying factors influencing the flow and effect of Co-

operative Extension Information in the suburban community.

The survey, to be completed about January 1963, will provide a picture of the variables which operate in the flow of information. The field experiment will attempt to measure how much some of these factors influence this flow. It can be done through more precise controls and manipulation of information presentation than is possible in a survey.

In some 400 preliminary field interviews in suburban areas, one question was, "As you know, these agricultural agencies are operated with public funds. How do you feel about using these public funds to provide information for the suburban household?"

The response was: "Strongly in favor" (33 percent) and "Strongly opposed" (4.5 percent) or a ratio of some 7:1. Among the "Strongly in favor" comment was: "Just wish they'd publicize more on how and where to get them (information)." One "Strongly opposed" answer was: "All of this is increasing taxes and if we can decrease taxes, we should."

## *Commodity Publication Study*

For the past 25 years, Massachusetts Extension has issued the monthly publication, "Dairy Digest." This contains timely information for dairymen, processors, and feed distributors.

At present a mail study is being made among those receiving this publication. Some of the 25 questions being asked are:

What do you consider your sources of dairy information?

Check three types of information (12 listed) which are most valuable.

Have you ever put to use any of the ideas you have read in Dairy Digest?

Have you ever sent for a report or publication that was discussed or mentioned in Dairy Digest?

Type of dairy operator, education, age, etc.

Response has been better than 50 percent. When the study is completed, it should give those responsible for the State dairy program a better picture of what is wanted by those with whom they work.

## *County Bulletin Study*

Middlesex, our most densely populated county, offers services to both rural and suburban areas. For 47 years Extension has issued a Middlesex County Bulletin containing timely information for agriculturalists, homemakers, and young people. This publication is sent monthly to 2,500 households.

Boston University is making a telephone study of the impact of this bulletin in the suburban areas. Of the 30 questions, 22 are related to the contents of the Bulletin, such as; articles read, requesting information or pamphlets mentioned, meetings attended as a result of announcements. The other 8 questions are on gardening, landscaping, and personal data.

Results of this study will guide, not only the future of the Bulletin, but also similar publications in other counties.

Those engaged in the production of horticultural crops have indicated





keen interest in the radio broadcast spray messages. These messages were started over 15 years ago when the timing of the application of sprays, especially in orchards, was most important.

Several years ago plans were made to drop this service. But the reaction from commercial growers to a survey made this impossible.

These spray messages now are sent during the growing season to 11 radio stations and the county horticulturists. Mailed special delivery late each afternoon, they are used the next morning. The horticulturists duplicate the messages for distribution to commercial growers. Today these messages remind vegetable and fruit growers, as well as the ornamentalists, to look out for plant pests.

### *Frost Warnings*

Over 40 years ago, one of the most serious problems facing our cranberry growers was lack of information on minimum bog temperatures expected during frost seasons.

After several years of intensive research, the late Dr. Henry J. Franklin developed a system of forecasting minimum temperatures. He designed a telephone system to relay this vital information to growers who paid for the service on a per-acre basis. Today the program includes local radio stations and a telephone-answering service which supplements the telephone relay system.

A recent survey showed that growers who own over 95 percent of the acreage with water available for flooding subscribe to the frost warn-

ing service. The service is now sponsored by the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association, under supervision of the Extension Cranberry Specialist. He also serves as chairman of the frost warning committee.

### *Television Feed-Back*

One objective of the Consumer Marketing Education Program is the dissemination of timely food marketing, economic, and technical information to consumers. For the past 4½ years our food marketing TV programs have been limited to 12 minutes of a 25-minute public relations program.

When a series of programs on "Factors Affecting Food Prices," was planned, a group of viewers agreed to serve as consumer critics. The 25 had previously requested educational material offered on a food marketing program. Twenty-one replies to the questionnaire were received; 86 percent had watched 5 or more programs.

In addition, 104 similar questionnaires were sent to other viewers. They were chosen at random from viewers who had requested a frozen foods leaflet on a different food marketing telecast. Forty-five replied; of these, 64 percent had watched over half the series.

One purpose of the questionnaire was to secure some indication of audience acceptance of a series on "Factors Affecting Food Prices."

Both groups indicated strong preference for a series of programs related to a common subject. This response is also shared by many educators and educational TV directors. They con-

sider the learning potential greater with continuity and progressive building within programs, rather than "one-shot" programs.

Among the problem areas for future food marketing programs, meat buying was mentioned as the most complex. Frozen foods, new diet and low-calorie foods, and packaging and pricing followed. A study workshop approach to future food marketing programing appears advantageous not only via mass media but as part of county programs.

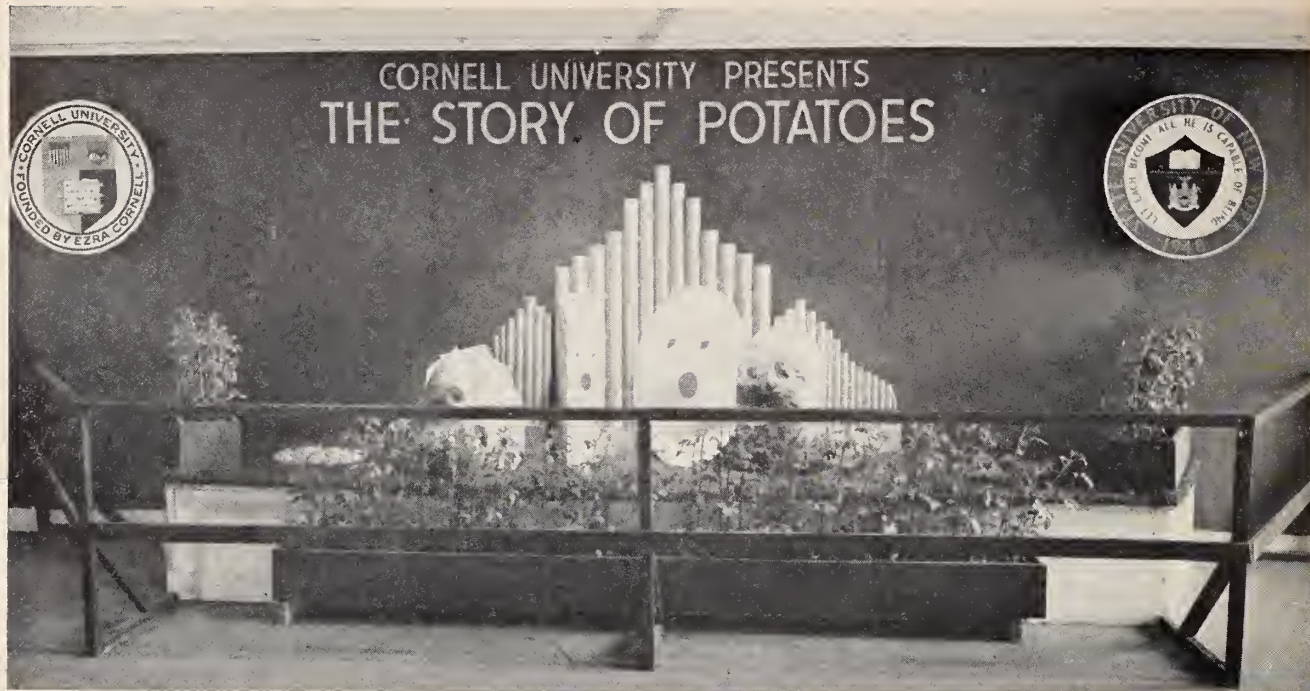
In connection with our 173 television programs in 1961, publications were offered to viewers 81 times. As a result 31,995 were sent to 23,341 different individuals, or an average of 395 per offer. The number of requests per offer varied from 8 to 1,717.

With each direct reply to a request for an extension publication, a letter briefly mentions the extension program and suggests contacting their County Extension Service for further assistance. Each of these is listed. Counties report that many new contacts have been made in this way, especially through publication offers on TV.

As a result of our television programs, many homemakers write for assistance on problems other than the subject of the telecast.

Our public supported extension programs must keep pace with the changing world. More time and thought must be spent in evaluating their success if we are to better serve the citizens of our respective areas. This can be accomplished by different methods, many of which can be developed locally through feed-back. ■





This Potato exhibit had an absolutely static front. Plastic potatoes represented chips, French fries, boiled, and baked forms. A quar-

ter on tape sang verses praising each form. The audience (11 percent of the gate) increased as music was played.

## selecting your audience with FAIR EXHIBITS

by ELMER S. PHILLIPS, Head,  
Visual Aids Service, New York

FROM time to time you read about experiences of individuals in the exhibit field. Often these articles indicate the discovery of a formula for successful exhibits. In other cases the report mentions only that some phase has given promise for future direction in the building of exhibits. And the author is happy to pass this on.

In both cases, most conclusions drawn from the success or failure of exhibits are based on a specific exhibit, in a specific place, with a rather definite audience. It is questionable whether some of the findings apply in other situations.

Some persons are certain that motion is the total answer for attraction. Others claim that color, shape, or other features are the attraction

and always build these specific elements into their exhibits.

I suspect that often the author is correct. Applied in other cases, however, I can almost certainly say that their findings might not be applicable. Let me tell you of an experience based on 10 years study of a single space at the New York State Fair.

About 10 years ago, the director of the fair offered a space in the Horticulture Building to the College of Agriculture for an exhibit. The space was 32 feet long by 20 feet deep and made a completely enclosed, darkened area. It had previously been used as a projection room for a commercial concern.

The space was dark, dirty, and dingy. However, it offered the possibility of experimentation.

First, a false wall, 2 feet from the regular wall was built on three sides of the room. An entrance and exit were made on opposite sides of the area. And a peculiarly shaped storage and exhibit space was built on the fourth side of the room between the two doorways.

This arrangement was intended for building circular and rectangular openings in the false wall so a diorama-type exhibit could be placed in each space. The whole area was painted dark blue.

Additional provision was made for the rear projection of either motion pictures or colored slides synchronized with sound. This arrangement was designed for breaking a large subject into approximately seven segmented parts.



Thus, like the formation of a good speech or radio talk, point by point, the larger subject could slowly be expanded into a unified whole.

A previous survey had shown that 75 to 80 percent of the people going through the fair came from city areas. It was decided that all exhibits would be built and structured for an urban audience. We set standards, however, that the rural people could see in the display of any of the subjects portrayed.

Because this was a completely closed booth, some outside means of attracting people was necessary. A low, 18-inch platform was built, surrounded by a light fence barrier.

### Conclusions Drawn

Tersely, these are the results of 10 years of exhibit experimentation:

- The platform on the outside of the booth, by its very tone, can pre-select the type of audience that enters the enclosed booth.
- No differences could be discerned between color, light, motion, and sound from the viewpoint of attracting audiences to the exhibit. It would be more appropriate to say that some novelty which might include any of these elements was necessary to attract a large number of persons.
- Segmentation of the ideas inside makes it easier for viewers to comprehend a large overall subject.
- Standardizing the sizes of the areas within the room made preparation and installation easy.
- Farm operators expressed pleasure in the story we told urban residents and admitted that often our visual presentation gave them ideas for their work.

We have used novelty items that include hatching baby chicks, magic shows, and even a "cockroach apartment house" outside of the booth.

There is a definite correlation between novelty and the audience (measured in terms of actual numbers and computed on a percent basis of the total fair goers). The greater the novelty—the greater the audience; the more select and specific the front attraction—the more select the audience.



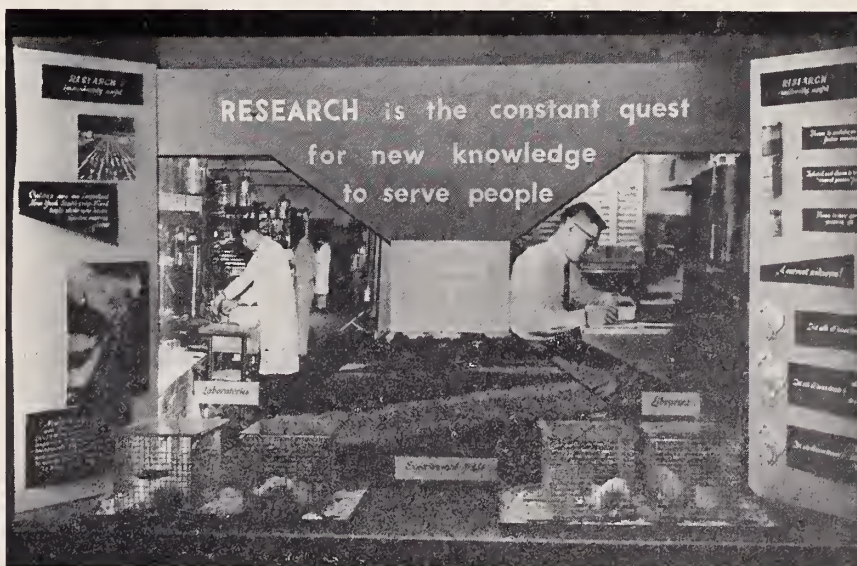
Cornell's Education exhibit was static with no sound. It was designed to pre-select those interested in higher education. The six percent of the gate who entered showed great interest in college.

### Comparisons Planned

This year we plan an entirely new space at the fair. Finished in copper and mahogany, it is planned for at least 5 years use.

We intend to duplicate some of the same experiments and thus hope to compare a light, airy, modern space with the figures from the past.

If a pattern develops, there may be more to report in the future. ■



Inside the exhibit about higher education were individual diorama-type displays similar to this one on Research.





## you can TELL A LOT by TELEPHONE

by WARD F. PORTER, Chief, Program  
Research Branch, Federal Extension Service

**K**NOWING your audience is as important and probably harder to do today than in the early days of Extension. New directions and new audiences for Extension make it necessary to find and use techniques that will provide objective information to plan and carry out sound programs.

One answer for analyzing audiences can be found in the common telephone. Interviewing via the telephone is relatively inexpensive, time-saving, and successful in getting response.

According to the 1960 Census, 78.5 percent of all U. S. households have a telephone. Of course, this percentage will vary among and within States, but telephone surveys are feasible.

### *Telephone Advantages*

Getting information about your audience through telephone interviews has many advantages. It is economical and has been proven practical and effective in many studies across the country.

Other things being equal, this technique requires less expense and time than personal interview or mail questionnaire surveys. The percentage of response is apt to be considerably greater than mail questionnaires. This alone justifies careful consideration of telephone interviewing in surveys which require limited quantities of information.

Telephone interviewing is ideally suited to volunteers and lay leaders. Involving such persons in collecting

information for extension program development is, in itself, a device for creating interest and acceptance of extension programs. Volunteers have successfully conducted door-to-door interviewing; telephone interviewing is probably less trying and less difficult.

Another advantage of telephone surveys is the convenience of directories for drawing random samples. You need only decide on the number of respondents needed for analysis and determine the approximate number of area households with telephones. Then select every "nth" name—starting at some random point—for the sample to get the number you want.

For example, this might mean taking every 50th, 75th, or 100th name. If the directory is large, it may be easier to use every "nth" page, and then select the person listed at some pre-determined position on the page. An alternate sample is easily drawn at the same time by taking the preceding or following name.

Business listings are, of course, excluded.

### *Noting Limitations*

One disadvantage of telephone interviewing is the "limited" amount of information that can be collected from any one respondent. Although time is important, the length of interviews need not be too restricted.

For example, in a series of county-wide consumer information surveys in Missouri, the average interview

lasted 12 minutes. In some instances, interviews ran much longer.

As many as 45 questions were involved in one of the Missouri county surveys. The amount of information collected was considerably greater than usual in mail questionnaires.

Experience with telephone surveys in other areas—Marquette, Mich.; Baltimore, Md.; St. Joseph, Mo.; and elsewhere—has been comparable.

Another difficulty commonly associated with telephone surveys is establishing with the respondent the "legitimacy" of the survey. The interviewer must, of course, "legitimize" the study; but various techniques for doing this have proven satisfactory.

Fears that respondents would refuse to cooperate because of frequent exposure to commercial salesmanship have proven largely unfounded. This is in spite of widespread use of phones for sales in larger cities.

Among other limitations, interviewers cannot observe certain characteristics, such as type of dwelling unit, or household furnishings. Respondents cannot be shown things which might be useful in a face-to-face interview for clarifying questions, or getting additional information. Too many people may not be included in the phone directory. Time limitations may restrict lengthy explanations, calculations, or open-end questions.

The basic principles of objective fact-finding apply to audience analysis using telephone interviews. The techniques of planning and carrying out extension surveys and evaluative studies are discussed at length in the



Federal Extension Service publication, *Evaluation in Extension*, as well as in many other texts.

Training interviewers is an important step in any study involving interviews. Such training should include a thorough discussion of the purposes of the study, the questionnaire, interviewing techniques, and practice interviews.

Practice interviews are helpful, particularly to inexperienced interviewers. One useful technique is to have two volunteers simulate an interview which the other interviewers criticize. Or comments and suggestions can be interjected during the playback of a recorded interview.

Questionnaires should be carefully worked out and pre-tested before the training session. Interviewers should be instructed to read the questions as worded to insure uniform interpretation.

Cooperation of the respondent depends a great deal on a proper introduction. Interviewers can be provided a suggested introduction, including: a reference to the interviewer's identity; the sponsor of the survey; the purpose, importance, and confidential nature of the study. The statement of purpose should be general, so as not to bias responses.

Advance publicity in the press, radio, or TV, can help prepare the area for the survey. Mention of such publicity often helps gain cooperation.

Close, continuous supervision of the interviewers is particularly important during early phases of the study. Questionnaires should be carefully edited by both the interviewers and the supervisor as soon after the interview as possible. This limits, somewhat, the number of interviewers.

In most telephone surveys participated in by FES, the number of

volunteer interviewers has ranged from 10 to 17. Even with 2 or 3 professional staff members supervising the field work, this represents a considerable workload.

It is important to keep nonresponse at a minimum. Properly trained and supervised interviewers in telephone surveys should have few outright refusals—less than 5 percent. A minimum of five "calls" should be required to reach those who are not at home.

### Information Collected

Information collected in telephone surveys varies from simple factual information to complex data reflecting levels of knowledge, opinions, attitudes, and practices.

The Missouri studies previously mentioned requested information on levels of knowledge about nutrition, food selection and care, food preparation, and personal and family characteristics. Information was also requested on the availability and use of mass media. These data are being used in planning consumer information programs to meet the needs and interests identified in the surveys.

Telephone surveys have been used to measure the impact of educational programs, as well as determine the characteristics of clientele. "Before and after" telephone surveys in Little Rock, Ark., and Marquette County, Mich., evaluated program effectiveness. A Baltimore, Md., telephone survey following an extension educational TV program, provided considerable information for evaluating the effectiveness of the program.

These and other studies demonstrate the feasibility of collecting objective information from representative samples drawn from large city

populations, as well as the open-country. All studies referred to have been carried out at a reasonable cost in time and money. In most cases, interviewing was completed in only 1 week. Samples ranged from 200 to more than 300 persons.

Telephone surveys can be useful tools in analyzing our audiences, as well as in evaluating the impact of our programs. We expect and predict more widespread use of this technique because you can tell a lot about your people through a telephone survey. ■

### Useful References

The experience of those who have tried this technique for analyzing audiences and evaluating programs should be helpful to others. References of interest include:

Glen H. Mitchell, *Telephone Interviewing*, Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, Mimeo Series No. AE 279, Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station, Wooster, Ohio, November 1957.

H. C. Little and Lorene S. Wilson, *Consumer Information Benchmark Study*, (a series of five reports), Missouri Extension Service, Columbia, Mo.

Margaret E. Holloway, *An Evaluation of the Maryland Extension "Fair Exchange" TV Program*, Maryland Extension Service, Baltimore City, Md.

W. F. Porter and Lorene S. Wilson, *Evaluation of St. Joseph Consumer Marketing Program*, Missouri Cooperative Extension Service Circular 784, June 1962.

# Questions they ask Can Tell You a Lot

by JOSEPH E. BEARD, Fairfax County Agent, Virginia

**F**AIRFAX County, Va., lies just across the Potomac River from Washington, D. C. In 1940 it was one of the leading dairy counties in the Washington milkshed, with 1,480 farms and a population of 41,000. Twenty years later, in 1960, the county population was 251,724; farms were reduced to 428.

Extension agents found themselves devoting more than 50 percent of their time to "Special Problems in Urbanization."

What guides does an agent use in determining when and how to recommend changes in such a county? Certainly he uses census data, reviews programs with leaders and committeemen, studies trends. But, where do you get the information to study the trends and present up-to-date information to committeemen and others?

This is not hard if you keep records of telephone calls, office calls, letters,

and other means of communication. List by subjects what people want, or ask, in sufficient detail to know exactly what they say or need.

Along with special problems developing in gardening, landscaping, insect control, plant diseases, sewage disposal, recreation, housing, community development, soils education, and consumer education, agents had special problems in knowing how to go about their tasks.

USDA specialists came to our assistance. They suggested that we keep a record of each call received by subject matter.

Each agent and secretary in the county office keeps a small note pad by the telephone or in his pocket. Each question asked is listed on a separate sheet giving the subject, date, and unusual information or circumstances.

These slips are dropped into a small card file box on each desk.

Slips are counted and listed for information in monthly and annual reports.

This system takes most of the guesswork out of what people really want or need. Records kept on all questions asked at the grass roots level really open your eyes to local problems.

The second year we kept records on all calls. We received, for example, 640 calls on what to do about skunks, squirrels, and groundhogs destroying fruits and vegetables in gardens.

One of our farmer committeemen took a dim view of this problem. His dog usually took care of the job. But, what agent can ignore 640 calls on any subject in any given year? We didn't.

Later, many grateful urban gardeners supported a move by county farmers for tax relief.

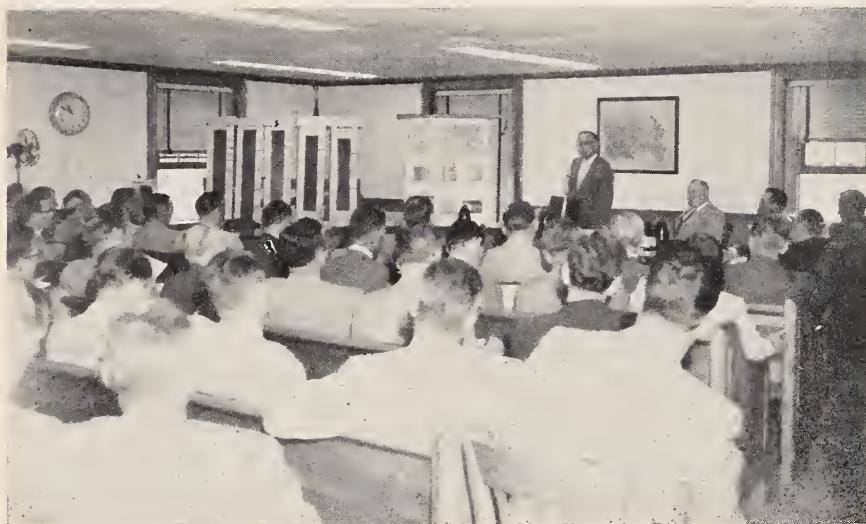
## *Special Programs Designed*

Homeowners, landscape gardeners, health departments, real estate developers, and contractors experience more problems in soils than farmers. Until recently too little thought has been given to this by extension workers.

Listening to what people ask has resulted in one of the most outstanding Soils Education Programs in the country. Farmers; homeowners; real estate developers; and the Departments of Health, Education, Public Works, Planning and Zoning, and Assessments all use our county soils survey information.

Our soil survey was designed to meet the needs of all the people in the county, whether farmers or non-farmers. Regular soils education classes are held for employees of the

(See *Recording Questions*, page 175)



Questions from Fairfax County residents showed agents that farmers were not the only people with soils problems. As a result, a soil survey was designed to meet the needs of all county people and soils education classes (pictured) were held for county government employees.



# Getting a Bird's-Eye View of our county people

by RALPH W. SCHALLER, Oregon County Extension Director, Missouri



**M**ost of us in Extension are reasonably well acquainted with the problems of families in the home economics clubs, livestock improvement associations, and other extension-oriented organizations.

But, what about the others? Our county is a lot bigger than that. And for our programs to be effective, we must get a true fix on the audience we want to capture.

These thoughts prompted us to take a look at our program development procedures in Oregon County. Too many times our program committee was made up of people we have been working with for years. We want and need new ideas and challenges.

We were aware of a large number of families reached only through radio and newspapers.

In an effort to get a better picture of our audience, we developed and carried out a study in 1958. We tried to get a bird's-eye view of our people through an impartial study of our rural area population.

The schedule of events for this survey project included:

- Approval by Extension Council
- Preparation of the schedule (questions)

- Selection of sample

- Training leaders

- Interviews

- Tabulating results

- Preparing the situation statement
- Action Program (Long-term goals selected by Council, short-term goals selected annually, annual plan of work made out by staff and council)

How did we determine whom to interview?

A county map showing all houses

was sent to our Division of Field Studies for sample selection. This office determined that 100 rural families would make an accurate sample from our 1,400 farmers.

## Revealing Results

Survey results were rather surprising. For example, we found that we were working with far fewer farmers than we imagined. Only one-third of the families interviewed gave farming as their major business or source of income.

The educational level of the people is important when selecting the methods to reach them. In our sample group, 263 people had passed their fourteenth birthday. Twenty-six percent of these had an eighth grade education; 11 percent had completed high school.

Age facts were also revealing. Thirty percent of the male population was over 50 years old; 17 percent of the female population was over 50. Twenty-nine percent of the males and 37 percent of the females were between 25 and 49 years old.

A number of "open-end" questions gave families an opportunity to express their opinions. For example:

Question: What would be the first thing you would like to do to improve your home?

Answers, in order of importance: Install a water system, remodel the kitchen, build a new home, other major remodeling.

In answer to these requests, a school was held on "farm buildings." Another school is being organized now on "planning a new home."

Question: What do you think provides the best opportunity to improve farm income in this area?

Answers: Improved livestock production and breeding, more use of fertilizer and pastures, improved marketing for livestock, off-farm job, better gardens.

By acknowledging the problems listed by these families, we have been able to plan several satisfying events.

The information obtained was used, along with other resources, to develop a county situation statement. This was offered to the council for study and formulating future programs. Leaders found the survey information more useful than census or other materials.

## Pitfalls to Avoid

A novice in surveys needs to watch certain steps for trouble spots. For example, the schedule (list of questions) can get too long and involved for ease of the interviewer.

We secured information on age, population, education, off-farm employment, family food buying and production, housing intentions, livestock data, crop production, and timberland management. A carefully selected number of topics would probably produce more useful information.

A lot of thought needs to go into the questions. They must be asked so the results can be tabulated.

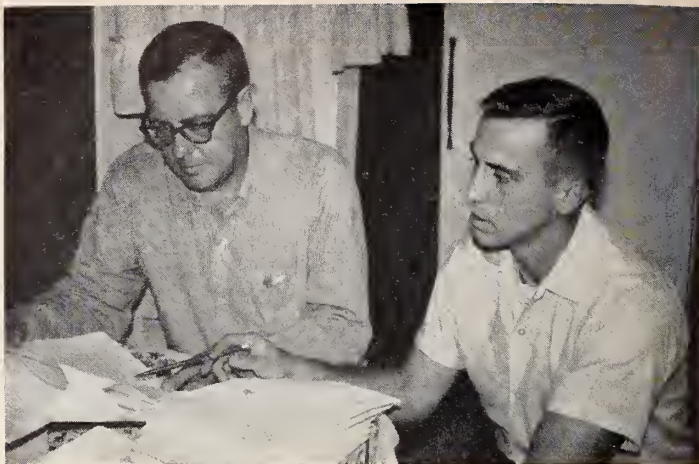
We planned to carry out this study by training council members to do the interviewing. But this was only partially successful as agents had to assist.

Only three families refused to cooperate in our survey. We believe our publicity program paved the way for interviewers. Both radio and news-  
(See *Bird's-Eye View*, page 175)



# Sampling Opinions by Questionnaires

by JOHN F. DAMON, Carroll County  
Agricultural Agent, New Hampshire



George Shaw, chairman of the Carroll County RAD Committee, and County Agent John Damon, also executive secretary of the committee, review questionnaires sent to summer residents and high school graduates in an effort to size up the county situation.

**H**ow can Carroll County, N. H., make full use of its resources? What development opportunities are available? Why do our summer property owners (who outnumber our full-time residents) make Carroll County their vacation home? Why do 60 percent of our high school graduates leave the county?

At first the RAD Committee, 20 competent county men and women, felt that the answers to these questions were obvious. But during preliminary analysis of the county's resources, doubts arose as to which development road was best.

They were puzzled by facts such as: Carroll County does not have an unemployment problem, but family income is \$1,000 less than the State average per year. Seasonal residents own a greater percentage of the land than full-time residents and pay up to 35 percent of the taxes.

The RAD committee wanted to learn the ideas of the summer residents and why high school graduates leave the county. This was and is being accomplished by questionnaires mailed to the summer residents and high school graduates.

## Summer Residents' Quiz

One thousand or more questionnaires will be or have been sent to summer residents. The questionnaire, one page long, asks six questions. On the reverse side, a letter describes the RAD organization and the purpose of the questionnaire.

Both were written by the agricultural agent and a member of the RAD committee. Suggestions as to what should be included in the questionnaire came from the entire committee.

The questionnaire was designed to give background material about the

nonresidents such as: "How many years have you been a property owner in Carroll County?" It also asked for suggestions for solving the underemployment problems. Three of the six questions offered unlimited opportunity to express opinions.

About 100 questionnaires were sent to one town. Fifty-four percent were returned. Almost all showed that the person had spent considerable time before answering.

The trial proved so successful that questionnaires have been sent to two more towns. The rest are to be mailed soon.

## Surveying Graduates

Seventeen hundred 3-page questionnaires were sent to graduates of two of the county's three high schools.

Questions ranged from: "Are you happy in your present position?" to "What would be necessary to interest you to return to the area to work?"

The questions that the RAD committee suggested were talked over with the guidance counselor of one of the high schools. He was also interested in learning the present educational level and training of the graduates. The final questionnaire and introductory letter were prepared by the agricultural agent and the guidance counselor.

The 54 percent summer resident return from the trial town showed considerable interest in what we are

trying to do. They also showed that time was spent thinking about the problems before answers were written.

The summer residents of the trial town are either past middle age or retired. On the whole, they would not like to make Carroll County their permanent home. Many want more police protection, better fire department, sewage, and town water. But they would like the area to remain rural with no increase in taxes. Some suggested ways to help the underemployment problem. Most of the summer residents like the area as it is.

This "leave it as it is" attitude must be considered by the RAD committee when making its development plans. We suspect that not all towns will feel the same way and depend on the questionnaire for proof.

High school graduates feel somewhat different. We realized a 50 percent return from one school. Of those returning questionnaires, almost half have gone on to school.

Will the college graduates return to Carroll County? Many graduates expressed an interest in returning if jobs were available.

We gather that the young people really like Carroll County and would like to return. This, as well as the information on training and educational level, will be helpful when the RAD committee makes its development plans and suggestions.

We feel that the questionnaires have several strong and a few weak



points. The suggestions of summer residents will be a great help in analyzing the needs of the area and will influence future development plans. Graduates also had an opportunity to express their opinions. And the questionnaire gave us an opportunity to tell them something is being done.

Tabulating the results is a big chore, especially when the questions offer an unlimited answer space. If the questionnaire is used again, we would attempt to narrow the field of answers.

Sampling audiences by a questionnaire is an excellent tool in determining the reactions of many people. The effectiveness of any questionnaire is measured by the return and the quality of those returned. The number returned and the quality are influenced by the public opinion, timing, advertising, and the wording of the questions and the introductory letter.

The county has not been able to grow in population and has been unsuccessful in attracting many new industries. What is the answer? Perhaps the questionnaires will offer solutions. ■

## A DIALOG (From page 163)

with his values for his farm. Likewise, the values of his friends and associates may conflict with his values regarding his farm.

**Q.** Now you're getting in pretty deep. Let's go back to the full-time commercial dairy farmers in the county. Even though my message is centered on them as my audience, I can see that audience divided into farmers who are among the first to adopt practices and those who do so later on. If I examined my talks and writings, it would appear as if I were expecting all receivers to be among the first to adopt practices, as if all were just waiting to hear from me about new ideas. I know better than that, but I act as if it were so.

**A.** You are not alone in that respect. We are all more or less like that. What we know is very important—to us. So, we reason, it must be very important to others.

Our audience can be sliced another way—according to the stages in the

adoption process. These are the awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption stages. There is an audience in each stage and methods of teaching will vary with each.

Then too, you also have an audience called the legitimizers, the leaders who "bless" your message and "open doors" for you.

**Q.** To me all this means, know your audience and more important, recognize the different audiences and adapt communications to those audiences. Thus far we have let our subject matter interest determine our audience, but we haven't considered enough their interests, needs, and motivations. Nor have we considered sufficiently their individual situations.

**A.** You have the idea of audience-centered communications, but how about those urban or suburban families? Are they another audience? Are they like your dairy farm audience? Obviously not; they don't have dairy cows.

But are there other differences? Do they know you? Do they have the confidence in you which comes from satisfactory previous experience? Do they want quick answers or do they want deeper understanding?

**Q.** I know what you mean. I studied dairying in college. I like dairying. I can think like a dairy farmer. I can put myself in their shoes. But these others—I guess I could if I had to.

**A.** You have just hit at the heart of this whole business of audience-centered communications—putting ourselves in the other fellow's shoes. Think like the other fellow. The technical word is "empathy."

I am reminded of the story about a bright little boy on a large plantation years ago. He had been playing in the fields all morning. At noon-time, coming in for dinner, he saw a commotion around the big house and asked why all the excitement. They told him the mule was lost. Everyone had been looking for the mule all morning and couldn't find it.

He left and in 20 minutes was back with the mule. Surprised, everyone asked, "Where did you find that mule? How did you know where he was?"

The little boy replied, "I just thought, if I was a mule, where would I go. I went there. And there he was." ■

## RECORDING QUESTIONS (From page 172)

different departments of county government working with or appraising soils.

Landscape schools are now held annually for nurserymen and their employees. A landscape and garden institute is held each year for owners of small homes. These activities came about after our records showed the demand for information of this type.

Our 4-H and youth programs have changed quite a bit, too. We formerly conducted 4-H projects in homemaking, agriculture, and home beautification.

We now have clubs in light horse and pony, canine care, and small engines. These are the result of hearing, "But I don't live on a farm, and I want my child to be a 4-H member."

Fairfax County extension agents now receive 118,000 different questions each year. The questions they ask tell us a lot. ■

## BIRD'S-EYE VIEW (From page 173)

papers carried items on the interviewers in the field.

Tabulation and summary of results proved to be the most difficult part of the process. Open-end questions drew a variety of answers.

This means of preparing a program is more time consuming than if we had used leaders and meetings. Yet, it is worthwhile when we see the results. We are far more aware of the characteristics and problems of our whole county and can make extension plans accordingly.

I would recommend an enterprise or scope area study for program building. This would give more detail and the direct programing would be beamed on the whole target.

The real reason for this approach was to get some new ideas. We have and we intend to put this new information about our audience to use. ■

# Local Editors Are Spreading the Word

*Communicating your RAD program—its goals, plans activities, and successes—to the public is*

*part of Extension's educational and organizational role in RAD.*

## Editor Stirs Interest With OEDP Reprint

"Our Overall Economic Development Plan could stir up a lot of local interest—a necessary part of any RAD success. But first, we must get it in the hands of the citizenry. How?"

That question came up as the Kalkaska County, Mich., RAD committee put the finishing touches on its OEDP in early 1962. Someone mentioned that the local weekly paper, the *Kalkaska Leader and Kalkaskian*, went into virtually every home in the county. Why not use it?

Although not on the committee, editor Wilson Rowell was eager to help. He ran the entire OEDP text as a center page. He then used the same type to run off one-page reprints plus most of the content of a hard-cover booklet.

The committee paid the newspaper for ink, paper, and other extra expenses. The editor provided most of the labor free of charge, so the total cost was well below a regular full-page advertisement.

"We sent most of the reprints out of the county," reports Norm Brown, county extension director and head of the RAD Agriculture and Forests

Committee. "About 25 went to State and Federal offices. Senators, congressmen, and others have gotten well over 100. Almost all reprints are now gone."

Brown notes novel evidence of thorough readership. Some 200 people have called the committee's attention to the OEDP's two or three minor typographical errors!—Hugh M. Culbertson, Assistant Extension Publications Editor, Michigan.

## Local Editor Handles News for Steering Group

Three newspaper editors are on the steering committee of the 11-county SE Iowa pilot project in area development.

One of the editors, Bob Norberg, writes news stories on area RAD steering committee actions for all nearby papers and radio stations. The Davis County extension office with Bill Beyers as director, handles mimeographing and mailing.

This kind of cooperation gives all the area's news outlets well-written,

thorough coverage—and an even break on RAD news. It's credited with helping to get "sensible" and "self-controlled" support from local papers and radio stations. They work with the committee—not ahead of it, or against it.

But not all the area's RAD mass media support is handled this way. Far from it!

Iowa State's extension editorial staff and other extension workers are working closely with local editors and radio stations. Main emphasis is to mesh the RAD program with editors' natural interest in developing the area's economy.

One effort has been an editor's background book, providing information on the area's development program. This is paying off in more and better stories and editorial comment. Plans for an editor's seminar on the area RAD program are being considered.

County extension directors in each of the 11 counties of the area keep up a steady flow of localized columns, news, and radio programs. These supplement and complement steering committee news.

Emphasis has been on honest-to-goodness involvement. It's a local people's program. They make the news. And, thanks to Norberg's committee releases, they read it. ■

